



Raised Right *Making smart progress for youth*

Raise the Age

During the 2007 session, Connecticut's legislature raised the age of adult jurisdiction from 16 to 18, effective January 1, 2010. Aside from serious and violent offenders, minors will be under the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system.

This is an important and historic change as Connecticut has been one of only three states to try all 16 and 17 year olds as adults -- no matter how minor their crime. The 2007 reform:

- brings Connecticut in line with national best practices,
- ensures youth face the consequences of their actions in a developmentally appropriate manner and environment and
- improves public safety by providing access to services and rehabilitation options to youth, lowering their chances of reoffending.

The legislatively mandated Juvenile Jurisdiction Planning and Oversight Coordinating Council (JJPOCC) is meeting regularly to guarantee timely and appropriate implementation of policy and practice shifts so that a smooth transition can occur in January of 2010. This group will also discuss and promote supplementary changes to statutes needed to ensure effective implementation.

What Kids Need Legislators to Do

- Collaborate fully with the JJPOCC to hold all state agencies and organizations accountable for the policy and practice changes necessary to transition most 16 and 17 year olds into the juvenile justice system in 2010.
- Follow the recommendations of the JJPOCC on statutory changes to facilitate implementation of Raise the Age legislation.
- Support legislation, policy and practice that will reduce the number of young people entering the juvenile justice system, including:
 - Shut down the school-to-prison pipeline through truancy prevention and measures to discourage the overuse of suspension, expulsion and school-based arrests.
 - Increase access to children's mental health services so that the juvenile justice system is not a default children's mental health system.

What You Can Do

- Tell your legislators that timely, effective implementation of Raise the Age is important to you and that you support early interventions like quality children's mental health services and incentives to support schools in reducing truancy, suspension and expulsion.
- Engage your friends and family in educating legislators
- Join CTJJA listservs and action groups for information, tips and advice about doing all of the above. See www.ctjja.org.

For more information contact Abby Anderson at 203-610-3494 or abby@ctjja.org



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Making smart progress for youth and families

Families With Service Needs

Status offenses are things like truancy, running away, out-of-control behavior and immoral conduct. Connecticut terms status offenders “Families with Service Needs (FWSN)” and sees 3600 to 4000 of these cases each year. Historically, more than half of FWSN youth end up with a delinquency petition. These statistics illustrate an opportunity for reform that Connecticut is seizing.

FWSN children and families are people in need of support, not people in need of incarceration. Thanks to the work of the FWSN Advisory Board and legislators who supported changes in policy and increased funding, Connecticut law recognizes that fact. Youth labelled FWSN can no longer be detained with youth who have committed crimes, bringing the state in line with the spirit of federal legislation. Policies and practices in the state are now based on a philosophy of family engagement and community-based services. Connecticut will identify high need youth and families earlier and provide a wider array of programs and services to address their needs and change their behaviors.

Young people will still face consequences, and parents will have help regulating dangerous behaviors. In most cases, families can get community-based services within two weeks. Families with a higher level of need will be contacted by a Family Support Center within 48 hours. The center will work with the youth and family to determine an action plan. Services available include family mediation, educational advocacy, mentoring, crisis intervention, Intensive In-home Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services (IICAPS) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST). The Family Support Centers can also refer to respite beds in the state.

What Kids Need Legislators to Do

- Follow the recommendations of the FWSN Advisory Board, released in December 2007.
- Implement concerted efforts to reduce truancy, the cause of about 50 percent of FWSN referrals.
- Authorize the \$350 million State Department of Education request for truancy reduction programming in the five largest “feeder” districts.
- Fund additional DCF FWSN liaisons.
- Fund six additional Family Support Centers so that services are available statewide.
- Require strong, meaningful collaboration between state agencies with responsibilities for children.

What You Can Do

- Tell your legislators to fund current Family Support Centers, six additional centers to serve the state’s children, and early interventions that will keep children in school and reduce truancy.
- Engage your friends and family in educating legislators.
- Join CTJJA listservs and action groups for information, tips and advice about doing all of the above. See www.ctjja.org.

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